

In Support of Raised House Bill 5306

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Programs located at Highland Park, Nathan Hale, Robertson and Verplanck Schools in Manchester

The Manchester Early Learning Center runs before and after school programs in 4 of Manchester's schools. Over the years we have had numerous licensing problems with physical plant issues that have been as small as outlet covers to as large as lead paint testing and monitoring. Each of these concerns requires both time and money on the part of our program, and our positive relationship with the schools has at times become strained as a result.

One of the more recent problems that has arisen from the physical plant requirements relates to a program that we just opened in the fall. Last May, our program was approached by a principal who noticed a need for a morning program in his school. We began the licensing process, which took months due to lead paint testing and required repainting as well as other physical plant issues. We were finally able to submit the license in mid September. Our initial inspection was set for October 22nd and our license was approved in early November.

We are a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide care that is both of high quality and also affordable for our families. We try to keep our tuition as low as possible so that working families can continue to make ends meet while knowing that their children are in a positive environment. Unfortunately, the time and money spent on these issues is a big expense, which only makes our goals more difficult. Lead paint testing costs hundreds of dollars and while other items are less costly, small charges for necessary materials such as radon tests, outlet covers and lidded trash cans certainly add up quickly. These are not one time expenses either as these materials require frequent replacement in shared schools where they can be an inconvenience to others using the space.

We certainly do not want to downplay the safety of the children in our programs. Their well being is our top priority, but the exact spaces where our programs run are deemed safe during the school day, so why should that be called into question when the bell rings? If it is determined that these physical plant regulations are necessary for the safety of school-age children, then they should also be enforced during the school day.